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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000139

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [LH](#)

SUBJECT: GAERC: SPOTLIGHT ON EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Classified By: DCM Damian R. Leader for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Foreign Minister Usackas will focus on the Eastern Partnership (EaP), Belarus and European Council Conclusions at the upcoming GAERC meetings. The GOL continues to support Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership. The GOL supports extending sanctions against Belarus for one year while suspending the visa ban for another six months. The GOL will likely weigh in on European Council Conclusions related to energy security, Eastern Partnership and the economic recovery plan. End Summary.

BELARUS ISSUES

¶2. (C) We met with the head of the MFA's Common Foreign and Security Policy Division, Egidijus Navikas, on March 12 to discuss the upcoming GAERC meeting. Navikas said that Foreign Minister Usackas will support extending sanctions for one year while suspending the visa ban for another six months. Navikas said that the GOL would like to see Belarus take positive steps forward but noted that there are no preconditions to Eastern Partnership participation. We urged the GOL to consider Belarus' participation only on the basis of significant, concrete steps forward. Navikas responded that the GOL is encouraging the GOB to do the right things but did not commit to link these actions to Eastern Partnership participation. We reminded the GOL that the May 7 EaP launch date coincides with the 10-year anniversary of former Minister of Internal Affairs Zakharenko's disappearance in Belarus and cautioned that Lukashenko's participation in the launch would undermine reform efforts. Navikas agrees that it would be easier if Lukashenko did not attend the launch meetings. Navikas said that Belarus' parliament may wait until May to discuss recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Note: The discussions on recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were previously scheduled for April.)

EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

¶3. (C) Navikas said that the GOL is working on preparations for European Council Conclusions which will be discussed in upcoming GAERC meetings. He notes that there are three elements of particular importance for the GOL:

Energy Security - Navikas said that more should be done to help isolated countries to tap energy and gas resources.

Eastern Partnership - The EaP declaration includes several proposals from the GOL. The GOL wants to specify that EaP will help to resolve frozen conflicts in participating countries. The GOL is also calling for more concrete language on financial assistance and on visa liberalization for EaP countries.

Economic Recovery Plan - Also a priority for the GOL, especially as it relates to financing for energy infrastructure.

WESTERN BALKANS

14. (C) Navikas said the GOL is concerned about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the EU should take more responsibility to send a message to Bosnian political leaders. The GOL supports the EC in moving forward to review Montenegro's candidacy for EU membership.

PLANNING FOR U.S.-EU SUMMIT

15. (U) Navikas noted that the GAERC meetings will include a Ministers' lunch to discuss the upcoming U.S.-EU summit in Prague. Navikas said the Ministers will likely collaborate on an agenda for the summit.

FRIENDS OF GEORGIA

16. (U) Navikas said that the Swedish FM is organizing a "Friends of Georgia" dinner on the margins of the GAERC meetings. The Georgian FM is invited to attend. Guests at the dinner will discuss Georgia's relationship with the EU and NATO.

CLOUD